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Agenda item 2

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Situation of human rights in Sri Lanka**Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Human Rights****Summary*

The present report, submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/1, provides a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. In the report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights notes the new Government's pledges to address long-standing issues but highlights the need for a coherent plan and concrete steps, particularly regarding accountability for past human rights violations and international crimes. The report provides recommendations for the Government and the international community to advance accountability, reconciliation and human rights.

* The present document was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/1, in which the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to present a comprehensive report on progress in reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, at its sixtieth session. The present report contains an analysis of the human rights situation in Sri Lanka from the adoption of resolution 57/1 in October 2024 until July 2025, with reference to events in previous years, where appropriate.

2. OHCHR welcomes the Government's engagement in the preparation of the present report, while noting its rejection of Human Rights Council resolutions 46/1, in particular paragraph 6 thereof, and 51/1, in particular paragraph 8 thereof. OHCHR sent questions to the Government and received a written response, and it shared the draft of the present report with the Government for factual comments, which it received.

3. In February 2025, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reviewed the ninth periodic report of Sri Lanka under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.¹ The Committee on Enforced Disappearances will review the initial report of Sri Lanka under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in September 2025. As of June 2025, the Government had nine pending visit requests from United Nations special procedure mandate holders.²

4. From 23 to 26 June 2025, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited the country, including Colombo, Trincomalee, Jaffna and Kandy. He met with the President, the Prime Minister and other ministers, political party leaders and parliamentarians, the Chief Justice, the Attorney General, senior security officials, the Governors of the Northern and Eastern Provinces, in Jaffna and Trincomalee, respectively, and representatives of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, the Office on Missing Persons, the Office for Reparations, and the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation. He met with survivors and victims from all communities, and with a wide spectrum of religious and civil society organization representatives and Malaiyaha Tamil community representatives.

II. Human rights context

5. Following the presidential elections in September 2024, Anura Kumara Dissanayake was elected President. In the November 2024 parliamentary elections, the National People's Power coalition, led by Mr. Dissanayake, secured a large majority, signalling a decisive mandate from the Sri Lankan people to undertake transformative social, political and economic reforms. Harini Amarasuriya was appointed Prime Minister, becoming the first woman to be appointed to the position since 1994. Only two women ministers, including the Prime Minister, were appointed to the Cabinet. Twenty-two women were elected to Parliament, doubling women's participation to 9.8 per cent, which is nevertheless below the regional average of 22.1 per cent.³ Local government elections were held in May 2025, following an extended delay resulting from political, legal and economic challenges.⁴ Although the National People's Power emerged as a leading party, winning 43.2 per cent of the vote, Tamil parties regained ground in the north and the east. Provincial council elections under the thirteenth constitutional amendment have not been held since 2014.

6. In his inaugural address to Parliament, the President acknowledged the harms and sufferings resulting from decades of divisive racist politics and ethnic conflicts.⁵ As the

¹ CEDAW/C/LKA/9.

² See <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?visitType=all&lang=en>.

³ CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/9, para. 33.

⁴ A/HRC/54/20, para. 5; and A/HRC/57/19, para. 6.

⁵ See <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/the-full-speech-delivered-by-president-anura-kumara-dissanayake-at-the-inauguration-of-the-first-session-of-the-tenth-parliament/>.

Government of Sri Lanka informed OHCHR, in January 2025, the President launched a “Clean Sri Lanka” project with the aim of promoting a new political culture and commitment to moral and ethical governance. The Government pledged to introduce far-reaching reforms and address some long-standing human rights concerns, including to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, tackle corruption, establish an independent public prosecutor’s office and ensure accountability for the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks and other emblematic cases.⁶ The election manifesto of the National People’s Power pledged a new constitution to guarantee equality and democracy and the devolution of political and administrative power to every local government, district and province.⁷ Since the formation of the new Government, OHCHR has observed a noticeable shift in discourse among government actors towards a more inclusive vision of national identity, although this has not yet produced concrete results.

A. Human rights impact of the economic crisis and corruption

7. The cumulative effects of the economic crisis and related austerity measures continue to be deeply felt. In 2024, the poverty rate in Sri Lanka stood at 24.5 per cent, almost double the figure in 2019.⁸ Food prices more than doubled between 2021 and 2024. Despite macroeconomic recovery, employment and real wages remained below pre-crisis levels, resulting in elevated levels of poverty and food insecurity.⁹

8. The World Food Programme estimated that 16 per cent of households nationwide were moderately food-insecure and that a higher proportion of female-headed households experienced food insecurity. More than half of all households turned to coping strategies such as skipping meals, eating less preferred food or limiting portion sizes, and over a quarter (26 per cent) of households consumed inadequate diets.¹⁰ These factors contributed to an increase in malnutrition among children under 5, from 12.2 to 17 per cent, and stunting among children under 5, from 7.4 to 10.5 per cent, between 2021 and 2024.¹¹

9. The Malaiyaha Tamil community, which was already facing structural and economic discrimination, was severely affected by the economic crisis. The estate community continues to face significant challenges in securing land and labour rights.

10. The Government’s economic and fiscal policies illustrate the challenge and complexity of balancing poverty alleviation and the fulfilment of other human rights obligations with fiscal consolidation pressures arising from debt restructuring and adherence to International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme parameters. The Government raised the personal income tax threshold from 1.2 million rupees to 1.8 million rupees, offering relief to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and removed value added tax on certain food items, such as fresh milk and yoghurt.

11. In the 2025 budget, 8.9 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product – or almost 60 per cent of government revenue – was allocated to servicing interest payments on government debt. The health and education sectors received allocations of 1.83 and 1.88 per cent of GDP,¹² respectively, reflecting increases from the previous year, and representing steps towards the election promise of the National People’s Power for allocations of 3 and 6 per cent, respectively.

⁶ See <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies>; and <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

⁷ See <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

⁸ See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/publication/sri-lanka-development-update-2025>.

⁹ See <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099416504222514112/pdf/IDU-5b9c001a-8831-43a2-92e7-71fbee0f642e.pdf>.

¹⁰ See https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000166874/download/?_ga=2.199169263.1974032769.1750044818-1762042277.1692779075&_gac=1.15669572.1747636759.Cj0KCQjwiqbBBhCAARIsAJSfZkZihhTIYjckzOu3oWEGukxxD2auS5KrGjIogu8M3qreArD_dhH1pgUaAq04EALw_wcB.

¹¹ See <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099416504222514112/pdf/IDU-5b9c001a-8831-43a2-92e7-71fbee0f642e.pdf>.

¹² See <https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/documents/paperspresented/1739850951071371.pdf>.

12. The Sri Lanka IMF programme sets an indicative target of 0.7 per cent of GDP as a floor for social safety net spending,¹³ which was met in neither 2024 nor 2023.¹⁴ The Government reported that it had achieved that target in March 2025 and had increased the budgetary allocation under the Aswesuma programme to 237 billion rupees (\$790 million) in 2025.¹⁵

13. In December 2024, Sri Lanka concluded a debt restructuring process. Private bondholders fell short in terms of the principle of shared responsibility underscored in the guiding principles on foreign debt and human rights, accepting a modest quantum of under 10 per cent in so-called “haircuts” on their holdings.¹⁶ Sri Lanka is expected to face a heavy external debt repayment burden over the next decade.¹⁷ Effective August 2025, goods from Sri Lanka will be subject to 20 per cent in “reciprocal tariffs” in the market of the United States of America,¹⁸ affecting the country’s recovery, poverty alleviation efforts and growth prospects. Such tariffs, although lower than initially announced, will particularly affect the apparel and textile sector, which directly employs nearly 400,000 workers and indirectly employs nearly 2 million workers,¹⁹ many of whom are migrant women workers from rural areas who lack adequate social protection.

14. Some important steps have been taken to address long-standing corruption concerns. In April 2025, the Proceeds of Crime Act was passed, strengthening the ability of Sri Lanka to recover illicit assets at home and abroad.²⁰ Also in April 2025, the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption launched the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2025–2029. Ongoing cases relating to counterfeit human immunoglobulin illustrate the impacts of corruption on the right to health in Sri Lanka,²¹ with former senior health ministry officials, including the former minister, being formally indicted on criminal charges in June 2025. Separately, two former ministers, one for sports and the other for trade, were found guilty of misappropriating State funds and given lengthy prison sentences,²² with other ministers arrested and investigated for corruption.²³ Such steps have an important value in signalling the Government’s continuing commitment to tackle these deep-rooted problems.

B. Legislative developments

15. In its campaign manifesto, the National People’s Power explicitly pledged to abolish “all oppressive acts”, including the Prevention of Terrorism Act.²⁴ In February 2025, the Government appointed a committee to review the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and provide recommendations for new counter-terrorism laws.²⁵ In May 2025, the Ministry of Justice and National Integration published a call for recommendations, comments and

¹³ See <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/view/journals/002/2023/408/002.2023.issue-408-en.pdf>.

¹⁴ See <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2025/English/1lkaea2025001-print-pdf.ashx>; and <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/CR/2024/English/1LKAEA2024001.ashx>.

¹⁵ See also https://publicfinance.lk/public/uploads/reports/file/1742809263_en.pdf.

¹⁶ See <https://odi.org/en/insights/common-framework-uncommon-challenges-lessons-from-the-post-covid-debt-restructuring-architecture/>.

¹⁷ See <https://erlassjahr.de/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Position-Paper-Sri-Lanka.pdf>.

¹⁸ See <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/07/further-modifying-the-reciprocal-tariff-rates/>.

¹⁹ See <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/covid-19-action-tracker/sri-lanka/>.

²⁰ See <https://www.tisrilanka.org/tisl-welcomes-passage-of-proceeds-of-crime-act-a-landmark-step-in-sri-lankas-anti-corruption-efforts/>.

²¹ See <https://www.tisrilanka.org/tisl-files-fr-petition-over-human-immunoglobulin-and-other-controversial-medical-supplies/>; and <https://www.tisrilanka.org/update-on-the-case-of-human-immunoglobulin-and-other-controversial-medical-supplies-scfr-99-2024/>.

²² See <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-ex-ministers-jailed-up-to-25-years-for-corruption/article69633864.ece>.

²³ See <https://economynext.com/sri-lanka-sees-high-profile-arrests-amid-pressure-on-government-to-deliver-222506/>.

²⁴ See <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

²⁵ See <https://www.dgi.gov.lk/dgi-media/cabinet-decisions/cabinet-decisions-taken-at-the-cabinet-meeting-held-on-19-02-2025>.

suggestions from the public on a new anti-terrorism bill, in which it was stated that any submissions should be received within two weeks, which is a very short deadline for legislation of such importance.²⁶ The Government informed OHCHR that it expected to gazette new legislation by September 2025. Meanwhile, the new Government has continued to use the Act to arrest and detain individuals (see paras. 21 and 22 below). It has also continued to renew extraordinary gazette notifications under section 12 of the Public Security Ordinance, which authorizes the President to deploy the armed forces to maintain public order, including during protests.²⁷

16. Despite the commitment of the National People's Power to amend the Online Safety Act, the law remains in force. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, OHCHR and United Nations human rights experts have previously raised serious concerns about its vague definition of offences, broad enforcement powers, disproportionate penalties, and lack of judicial oversight.²⁸ The Government informed OHCHR that the Cabinet has appointed a committee to formulate amendments to the law. The combined effect of the Online Safety Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act has created a powerfully constricting legal framework that unduly restricts the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, both online and offline.

17. The Government proposed significant amendments to the Personal Data Protection Act and gazetted a bill to that effect in March 2025.²⁹ One of the key issues is the inclusion of broad exemptions under section 3, which allows the processing of personal data for reasons of national security, public order or public health without clear and strict oversight, potentially infringing individuals' rights to privacy.

18. There have been long-standing calls to reform the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act. In February 2025, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women noted that that Act still did not specify a minimum marriage age and reserved key legal and judicial positions established thereunder exclusively for Muslim men.³⁰ The previous Government had prepared a bill to amend the law in May 2023, but the current Administration has said that it will undertake further consultations.³¹

19. A private member's bill submitted to Parliament in April 2023, seeking to repeal or amend sections 365 and 365A of the Penal Code to decriminalize consensual sexual conduct between adults, lapsed with the previous Parliament. The Supreme Court had affirmed³² the constitutionality of the bill, and OHCHR urges the Government to proceed afresh with such an initiative. In May 2025, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka sent a letter to the Minister of Justice and National Integration expressing concerns about the continued prevalence of "hostile and discriminatory discourse against the LGBTIQ community".³³

C. Ongoing human rights concerns

1. Arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and custodial deaths

20. OHCHR and United Nations human rights mechanisms have repeatedly raised concerns about the routine use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, notably in places of detention.³⁴ Multiple cases of deaths in police custody, allegedly resulting from torture or ill-treatment, deaths in prisons and allegedly arbitrary arrests during drug raids were reported during the reporting period, with a lack of effective investigation into these cases. In one

²⁶ See https://www.moj.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=673:notification-to-the-public-anti-terrorism-bill&catid=23:special-notice&Itemid=241&lang=en.

²⁷ See, e.g., https://documents.gov.lk/view/extra-gazettes/2024/4/2381-06_E.pdf.

²⁸ See, e.g., <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/10/human-rights-concerns-over-two-draft-laws-sri-lanka>.

²⁹ See <https://www.dpa.gov.lk/newministry.php>.

³⁰ CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/9, paras. 61 and 62.

³¹ See <https://www.newswire.lk/2024/11/06/muslim-marriage-act-govt-clarifies-stance/>.

³² See https://supremecourt.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/sc_sd_13_2023.pdf.

³³ See https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/HRCSL-Press-Notice-22_05_2025.pdf.

³⁴ CCPR/C/LKA/CO/6, para. 26.

high-profile case, Muthuwadige Sathsara Nimesh died in police custody in April 2025, amid allegations of torture at Welikada Police Station.³⁵ The Government informed OHCHR that there had been 13 cases of custodial deaths since 2024; that two officers had been suspended over Mr. Nimesh's death; and that, since 2024, the Special Investigation Division had investigated six cases of torture by police officers and two cases of illegal arrest by police officers, without providing further details. The Government also informed OHCHR that, in May 2025, the new acting Inspector General of Police had circulated the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka guidelines on preventing custodial and encounter deaths. On 5 August 2025, following a parliamentary vote, the President approved the removal of Deshabandu Tennakoon,³⁶ who had been found responsible by the Supreme Court for committing torture in 2010, from the post of Inspector General of Police. In February 2025, Mr. Tennakoon was arrested on charges of conspiracy to commit murder in a separate case.³⁷

21. Despite pledges by the Government to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, its continued use has led to further arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions without charge or trial. During the reporting period, individuals, mainly from Tamil and Muslim communities, were arrested and detained, including for participating or being involved in the organization of memorialization activities or protests.³⁸ In one high-profile case, a 23-year-old Muslim youth was arrested in March 2025 and subsequently detained under the law for pasting stickers criticizing Israel in a shopping mall.³⁹ Following widespread public criticism, he was released on bail in April 2025 with a series of restrictions, which have since been lifted.

22. The Government informed OHCHR that 49 arrests had been made under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 2025 (as at 23 May 2025), while 38 arrests had been made in the entirety of 2024. Regarding individuals awaiting charges or trial as of May 2025, the Government informed OHCHR that 18 were currently being held under detention orders; 22 individuals were on remand by orders of magistrates' courts, while 40 others had been indicted and were being held on remand by orders of the High Court. OHCHR received information from other sources that there were 12 individuals serving prison sentences for convictions under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. In terms of releases, the Government indicated that 23 individuals had been released in 2024 and that, as at 23 May 2025, 21 further individuals had been released.

2. Civic space restrictions and reprisals

(a) Legislative and bureaucratic obstacles

23. The new Government has taken initiatives to interact and consult with some civil society organizations in Colombo on different processes, including on certain draft laws, including the draft Non-Governmental Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act. OHCHR stresses the importance of transparency and adequate consultation with key stakeholders and is concerned about persistent restrictions faced by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including limitations on access to funding and the imposition of onerous bureaucratic requirements, which continue to constrain their operating environment, particularly in northern and eastern Sri Lanka.⁴⁰

24. In December 2024, the National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations, which has been under the authority of the Ministry of Public Security since July 2022, reissued a directive requiring all foreign and national organizations to register with the

³⁵ See <https://www.right2lifelanka.org/youth-dies-in-custody-at-welikada-police-station-amid-allegations-of-torture>.

³⁶ See https://www.supremecourt.lk/images/documents/sc_107_2011.pdf; and <https://www.newsonair.gov.in/sri-lankan-president-approves-removal-of-police-ig-deshabandu-tennakoon-following-parliamentary-vote/>.

³⁷ See <https://colombogazette.com/2025/02/28/court-orders-arrest-former-igp-deshabandu-tennakoon/>.

³⁸ See, e.g., <https://www.dailymirror.lk/amp/opinion/Continued-use-of-PTA-under-new-President/172-309130>.

³⁹ See <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/250330/news/man-arrested-under-pta-for-pasting-anti-israel-posters-in-public-places-593861.html>; and <https://www.hrcsl.lk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Findings-and-Recommendations-in-Case-No.-SUO-MOTU-08-25-and-Repeal-of-PTA.pdf>.

⁴⁰ See A/HRC/50/23/Add.3.

Secretariat under the Voluntary Social Service Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act, regardless of whether they are already registered under other laws. The directive stipulates that registration is conditional upon prior receipt of a security clearance from the Ministry of Defence.⁴¹ Such security oversight of civil society organizations risks repression of dissenting voices and reflects the militarization of civilian administrative functions highlighted in previous reports. In cases where security clearance from the Ministry is not provided, registration is refused, with no avenues for appeal.

(b) Surveillance, intimidation and reprisals

25. Sixteen years after the end of the war, meaningful and comprehensive security sector reform is yet to take place. Consequently, the surveillance apparatus, especially in the north and east, has remained largely intact, with minimal oversight or direction from the central Government.⁴² OHCHR observed continued patterns of surveillance, intimidation and harassment of families of the disappeared, community leaders and civil society actors, especially those working on accountability for enforced disappearances and other conflict-related crimes, land seizures and environmental issues, and those working with former combatants in the north and east of Sri Lanka. According to information received, military and civilian intelligence officials, including from the Criminal Investigation Department and the Terrorism Investigation Division, often summon them or visit them at their homes or offices to question their programmes, funding, staff contacts and international travel, without a legal basis. Some received police summons and faced legal harassment for participating in protests.⁴³

26. Since August 2024, OHCHR has received reports of harassment and intimidation by State security officials against seven human rights defenders and families of the disappeared in north and east Sri Lanka who had engaged with the United Nations or other international actors. Three other human rights defenders were summoned by the Terrorism Investigation Division and questioned about their alleged participation in events and demonstrations, both domestically and abroad, including at sessions of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Another allegedly received veiled death threats from a police officer following a visit to Europe.

3. Land appropriation and threats to religious sites

27. Since coming to power, the Government has taken some steps towards building trust with conflict-affected communities in the north and east, such as reopening the Palali-Achchuveli and other roads,⁴⁴ increasing the budget for infrastructure and development initiatives, upgrading Jaffna library, and releasing some of the land occupied by the military.⁴⁵ Such initiatives, however, have been undermined by other developments, including recurring disputes with Buddhist clergy and State officials from the Departments of Archeology, Wildlife Conservation and Forest Conservation;⁴⁶ controversial economic activity, in particular sand mining; and, significantly, a recent initiative purporting to verify land ownership in the Northern Province.

28. Apart from long-standing land disputes with security authorities (such as in relation to the Parakumba naval base in Mutur, Trincomalee District, and the Gotabaya naval base in Mullaitivu),⁴⁷ there have been new conflicts with Department of Archeology officials in

⁴¹ See <https://ngosec.gov.lk/news-events/notice>.

⁴² A/HRC/44/50/Add.1, para. 73.

⁴³ Information on file with the Secretariat.

⁴⁴ See <https://pmd.gov.lk/news/palali-achchuveli-main-road-reopens-after-3-decades/>; and <https://alt.army.lk/sfhqj/content/reopening-vasavilan-palaly-road-after-34-years>.

⁴⁵ See <https://alt.army.lk/sfhqj/content/land-released-civilians-jaffna-%E2%80%93-landmark-ceremony-held-district-secretariat>.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., <https://srilankabrief.org/protest-against-land-appropriation-by-the-archaeological-department-in-verugal/>; and <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamils-trincomalee-protest-against-sinhalisation>.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.virakesari.lk/article/203644> (in Tamil); and <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/mullaitivu-landowners-demand-return-ancestral-lands-seized-sri-lankan-navy>.

Verugal, Trincomalee District, and with Department of Forest Conservation officials in Vakara, Batticaloa District.⁴⁸ There have been reported confrontations between communities and business interests in relation to sand mining in Jaffna, Mannar and Mullaitivu,⁴⁹ in some instances with the involvement of former military personnel.⁵⁰ The Government informed OHCHR that steps were under way to release land in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, with some areas ready for imminent release, and that a dispute review mechanism was being considered for contested religious sites. The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation has intervened in one long-standing dispute at Tissa Vihara in Thaiyiddy, Jaffna.⁵¹

29. In Gazette No. 2430, dated 28 March 2025,⁵² a series of notices were issued covering 5,941 acres of land in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar and Mullaitivu Districts, stating that, if no claims were made in respect of the specified lots by 28 June 2025, those lands would become State land in accordance with the Land Settlement Ordinance. A three-month time frame for assertion of property rights in conflict-affected areas, where families remain displaced by the war and many lack property titles and related documentation due to natural disasters, among other reasons, is grossly inadequate. There were widespread concerns among various stakeholders, and a fundamental rights petition was filed before the Supreme Court in June 2025, challenging the gazette. The Court issued an interim order suspending the operation of the gazette; subsequently, the Government revoked it, following a Cabinet decision.⁵³

III. Impunity, accountability and reconciliation

30. Sixteen years after the armed conflict, it is important for the Government to fully acknowledge the widespread and serious violations, including international crimes, committed during the civil war, provide adequate redress, and ensure truth and justice for victims. In his inaugural address, the President emphasized that his Government's mandate reflected the nation's call for justice and promised to restore trust in the rule of law by thoroughly investigating "controversial crimes", underlining that "justice must be served to the victims, and the perpetrators must be held accountable".⁵⁴ These statements offer a renewed opportunity to advance accountability if they are translated into concrete and sustained action. Meanwhile, impunity remains entrenched, and the structural conditions that led to past violations persist.

31. Since its establishment in 2018, the Office on Missing Persons has not clarified the fate and whereabouts of thousands of forcibly disappeared persons and faces a lack of trust from victim communities. Successive Governments, particularly during the period 2019–2022, have undermined the institution's independence by appointing members lacking credibility and independence. A lack of political will, a weak institutional framework, and limited resources and capacity have also prevented the Office on Missing Persons from achieving its core mission. The Government informed OHCHR that, as of December 2024,

⁴⁸ See <https://srilankabrief.org/protest-against-land-appropriation-by-the-archaeological-department-in-verugal/>; and <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamils-trincomalee-protest-against-sinhalisation>.

⁴⁹ See <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/illegal-sand-mining-soars-sembiyanpatru-north-amid-inaction>; <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/former-sri-lankan-soldiers-hired-international-corporations-land-grabs-north-east>; and <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/tamil-protests-halt-another-sand-mining-attempt-mullaitivu>.

⁵⁰ See <https://lankaleader.lk/news/11920-ex-military-personnel-recruited-by-mining-companies-to-intimidate-local-residents>; and <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/former-sri-lankan-soldiers-hired-international-corporations-land-grabs-north-east>.

⁵¹ See <https://onur.gov.lk/blog/2025/06/06/press-statement-issued-by-the-office-for-national-unity-and-reconciliation-regarding-the-jaffna-tissa-temple-issue/>.

⁵² See [https://documents.gov.lk/view/gazettes/2025/3/2025-03-28\(III-0\)E.pdf](https://documents.gov.lk/view/gazettes/2025/3/2025-03-28(III-0)E.pdf).

⁵³ See <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Supreme-Court-suspends-recent-gazette-on-Northern-Province-land/108-312742>.

⁵⁴ See <https://www.presidentsoffice.gov.lk/the-full-speech-delivered-by-president-anura-kumara-dissanayake-at-the-inauguration-of-the-first-session-of-the-tenth-parliament/>; and <https://www.newswire.lk/2025/05/19/16th-war-heroes-commemoration-president-akds-full-speech/>.

the Office on Missing Persons had traced 18 individuals (out of 15,000 cases filed),⁵⁵ without providing further details, and had referred 4,611 families to the Office for Reparation for “family revival payments”.

32. The Government has pledged to investigate and serve justice for the disappearances that took place in all areas.⁵⁶ The Prime Minister publicly acknowledged that the public has lost trust in the Office for Reparations and the Office on Missing Persons, and that they “lacked adequate strength and were largely ineffective”.⁵⁷ To restore trust and ensure justice, the Office on Missing Persons must meet clear, transparent and time-bound goals. Legislative reforms to strengthen its institutional independence and capacity, by increasing its annual budget, amending the Office on Missing Persons Act to improve its investigative power and witness protection, implementing victim-centred policies, and mandating full cooperation from State agencies and security forces, paired with strong participation of civil society, would also help restore the credibility of the institution and ensure that it fulfils its mandate to families of the missing and to the broader public.

33. The Government indicated that the Office on Missing Persons had observed investigations into mass graves, including in Mannar, Batticaloa, Mullaitivu, and Port City Colombo, seeking to ensure the preservation, exhumation and identification of remains. At time of writing, OHCHR is aware of five mass grave sites currently being exhumed in Mannar, Port City Colombo, Mullaitivu, and Chemmani (near Jaffna). During his visit, the High Commissioner had the opportunity to visit the Chemmani site. There is an urgent need to ensure the preservation and exhumation of mass graves and strengthen forensic capacity. While noting that the Office on Missing Persons is collaborating with the International Committee of the Red Cross and receiving legal and forensic expertise, OHCHR recommends that the Government proactively seek international support to ensure sufficient financial, human and technical resources to conduct exhumations in line with international standards.⁵⁸

34. The Government reported that the Office for Reparations had granted conflict-related reparations to the value of approximately \$6.78 million to 11,270 families in 2024, and some \$513,000 to 1,292 families from January to April 2025. Of these beneficiaries, 10,954 families were from the Northern and Eastern Provinces in 2024, as were 1,290 in 2025.

35. The Government has pledged not to interfere with commemoration events, and informed OHCHR that there were no restrictions on family members memorializing their loved ones, provided that they did not glorify terrorism. In November 2024, the Mannar Magistrate’s Court dismissed an application filed by police, seeking a conditional restraining order to prevent any commemoration events. In general, communities in the north and east were able to organize or participate in memorialization initiatives unimpeded.

A. Truth-seeking mechanism

36. The Government informed OHCHR that a truth and reconciliation commission would be established following consultations with stakeholders. In January 2024, the former Government presented a draft truth and reconciliation commission law to Parliament. Victims and civil society strongly opposed the establishment of that mechanism, suggesting that the Government first take steps to create confidence-building measures for transitional justice.⁵⁹ In pursuing this initiative, the new Government needs to foster trust with affected

⁵⁵ See also

https://www.moj.gov.lk/index.php?Itemid=101&catid=27&id=430&lang=en&option=com_content%27&view=article.

⁵⁶ See <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

⁵⁷ See

<https://www.pmooffice.gov.lk/news.php?para=RU5vekFVR2dpQTd2VGRIkMkZUNE4wSXgyVjBCMjNYV2pTMXJ6blQxNmE0TGpSWEgrVHFCTktyRzRCRzdidmc4cQ%3D%3D&>.

⁵⁸ See communication LKA 6/2023, available from

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28293>.

⁵⁹ See <https://sangam.org/report-of-the-consultation-task-force-nov-2016/>.

communities through transparent and genuine consultation on transitional justice and build upon recommendations made by OHCHR and United Nations human rights experts over the years, in addition to those of the 2016 consultation task force.⁶⁰ The Government informed OHCHR that, in August 2025, the Cabinet had approved the formulation of a policy and action plan on reconciliation.

37. During the period 1987–1989, thousands of Sinhalese youths, many suspected of affiliation with the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna were subjected to enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and torture and other forms of ill-treatment.⁶¹ In April 2025, the 1998 report of the commission of inquiry into the establishment and maintenance of places of unlawful detention and torture chambers at the Batalanda housing scheme, which had never previously been discussed, was tabled for discussion in Parliament. For transitional justice in Sri Lanka to be truly comprehensive and credible, the abuses in the south must be acknowledged and documented alongside those in the north and east, all victims must be included in truth-telling and reparations, and accountability must be pursued for all perpetrators, regardless of affiliation.

B. Emblematic cases

38. Lack of accountability for past and present human rights violations at all levels remains a fundamental human rights issue in Sri Lanka, particularly in cases allegedly involving members of the security forces.⁶² The unwillingness or inability of the State to prosecute and punish alleged perpetrators is best illustrated by the continued lack of meaningful progress in many emblematic cases.

39. In October 2024, the Ministry of Public Security reportedly instructed the acting Inspector General of Police to expedite investigations into seven high-profile cases, two of which – the alleged kidnapping and murder of journalist Taraki Sivaram in 2005 and the disappearance of Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath, then Vice-Chancellor of the Eastern University of Sri Lanka, in 2006 – relate to the wartime period. In the latter case, one suspect, Sivanesanathurai Chandrakanthan (also known as Pillayan), was arrested by the Criminal Investigation Department in April 2025⁶³ and formally detained for 90 days under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.⁶⁴ Four other alleged perpetrators were also arrested in relation to this case.⁶⁵ In January 2025, the Attorney General announced his decision to fast-track 11 pending “serious criminal prosecutions”, including several corruption cases.⁶⁶ In March 2025, two former members of the intelligence services of the Sri Lanka Army were detained for their alleged involvement in the abduction and assault of journalist Keith Noyahr in May 2008.⁶⁷ In July 2025, a former commander of the Sri Lanka Navy was detained over a 2010 case of abduction and disappearance.⁶⁸

40. The President, Mr. Dissanayake, stated that the Government would investigate and bring to justice those responsible for the killing of sportsman Wasim Thajudeen in May 2012 and newspaper editor Lasantha Wickrematunge in January 2009 and for the disappearance of cartoonist Prageeth Ekmaligoda in January 2010.⁶⁹ However, tangible progress on those cases remains limited. In relation to investigations into the assassination of Mr. Wickrematunge, the Attorney General informed investigators on 27 January 2025 of his

⁶⁰ See <https://sangam.org/consultation-task-force-final-report/>.

⁶¹ See <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa37/021/1990/en/>.

⁶² A/HRC/54/20, para. 61; A/HRC/46/20, paras. 24–28; and A/HRC/51/5, para. 50.

⁶³ See <https://www.dailynews.lk/2025/04/09/lawnorder/759216/pillayan-arrested/>.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.newswire.lk/2025/04/12/pillayan-detained-under-pta-for-90-days/>.

⁶⁵ See <https://www.tamilguardian.com/content/associate-pillayan-arrested-over-disappearance-eastern-university-vice-chancellor>; and <https://www.newswire.lk/2025/07/06/pillayans-associate-iniya-bharathi-arrested/>.

⁶⁶ See <https://www.sundaytimes.lk/250112/news/appeal-court-president-to-resign-amid-govts-impeachment-move-584584.html>.

⁶⁷ See <https://www.newswire.lk/2025/03/02/keith-noyahr-abduction-case-two-suspects-arrested/>.

⁶⁸ See <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka-arrests-ex-navy-chief-over-abduction>.

⁶⁹ See <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Will-probe-killings-of-Thajudeen-Lasantha-President/108-295635>.

decision not to prosecute three key suspects, who had previously been remanded and later released on bail, despite evidence linking them both to the murder and to the obstruction of investigations.⁷⁰ In February 2025, following public pressure, the Attorney General reversed his earlier decision to discharge the suspects.⁷¹

41. Regarding the “Trincomalee 11” case involving the enforced disappearance of Tamil individuals in 2008 and 2009, two Supreme Court judges in March 2025 recused themselves from hearing the petitions filed against Wasantha Karannagoda, a former naval commander, citing personal reasons. In the case of the killing of unarmed civilian protesters by military personnel in Weliweriya in August 2013, the accused were acquitted of all charges, and the Government informed OHCHR that the case had been closed in May 2024. None of the other cases highlighted by OHCHR reports⁷² has seen substantive progress.

42. OHCHR remains concerned about ongoing impunity for conflict-related sexual violence and the persistent data vacuum regarding the number of investigations and prosecutions imposed for conflict-related sexual violence cases allegedly committed by armed forces and police personnel.⁷³ Survivors’ fear of retaliation, social stigma, and lack of trust in justice mechanisms have contributed to significant underreporting. The wide prosecutorial discretion afforded to the Attorney General, a general reluctance to act on uncorroborated evidence, the limited investigative capacity of the police,⁷⁴ the lack of qualified forensic experts,⁷⁵ and a shortage of Tamil-speaking officers⁷⁶ are collectively hindering victims’ access to justice and perpetuating impunity.

43. The 1996 rape and murder of Krishanthi Kumaraswamy remains the only instance where Sri Lankan soldiers were convicted of wartime sexual violence. Although one soldier testified that he was ordered to rape and kill, no superiors were investigated. In the 2015 Visvamadu case, four soldiers were convicted of gang rape and sentenced to 25 years’ imprisonment, but the verdict was overturned on appeal in 2019. The victims’ appeal to the Supreme Court has remained pending for six years. All other cases monitored by OHCHR have either stalled or ended with the accused acquitted or released on bail, effectively ending investigations.

44. A key obstacle to justice has been the need for reform within the Attorney General’s Department to ensure that Sri Lanka has an independent prosecutorial authority to prosecute grave human rights violations. In its policy manifesto, the Government had pledged to introduce a directorate of public prosecution independent of the Attorney General’s Department.⁷⁷ An expert committee has been established to study the establishment of an independent prosecutor’s office.⁷⁸ The Government informed OHCHR that a committee had been tasked to develop initial proposals and that feedback from the public, the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and civil society would be sought on the draft concept paper.

C. Accountability for the Easter Sunday attacks

45. The President has pledged a comprehensive investigation into the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks, acknowledging widespread public concern that the attacks may have been politically

⁷⁰ See <https://economynext.com/key-suspects-ordered-freed-in-high-profile-sri-lanka-assassination-203354/>.

⁷¹ See <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/AGs-decisions-in-criminal-matters-should-not-be-reviewed-by-political-authorities-BASL-tells-President/108-301940>.

⁷² See the conference room paper of the OHCHR investigation on Sri Lanka, entitled “Report of the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL)”, paras. 235–239, available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/oisl>; and A/HRC/57/19, para. 44.

⁷³ See CAT/C/LKA/CO/5 and CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/8.

⁷⁴ See A/HRC/45/45/Add.1

⁷⁵ See <https://equalitynow.org/what-we-do/womens-rights-around-the-world/womens-rights-in-asia/>.

⁷⁶ See CEDAW/C/LKA/CO/9.

⁷⁷ See <https://www.npp.lk/en/policies/npppolicystatement>.

⁷⁸ See <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Cabinet-approves-study-on-Independent-Prosecutors-Office/108-308474>.

motivated.⁷⁹ Subsequent Governments since 2019 have failed to provide a comprehensive account of the circumstances that enabled those attacks, particularly regarding the role of the security establishment. Hence, there continues to be an urgent need for an independent and transparent inquiry into these attacks.

46. The Government informed OHCHR that, on 22 April 2025, it had appointed a four-member committee to study the Presidential Commission of Inquiry report for further investigations. The Government removed the chief of the State Intelligence Service and a former Deputy Inspector General of Police. At the time of writing, over 40 criminal and more than 280 civil cases have been filed in connection with the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks. Most of these cases remain at the preliminary stages, and none of them has resulted in a conviction. Proceedings in the main case, involving 24 defendants, began on 10 October 2023, and by 2 April 2025, the trial had reached its 104th day.

47. The 2023 Supreme Court orders for the former President and several senior officials to pay compensation personally have been fully implemented. The victims' fund established at the Office for Reparations had received 311 million rupees (\$1 million) as of 25 April 2025, and a total of 1 million rupees (\$3,300) had been paid to each family of the 225 deceased victims, according to the Government.

IV. Further options for advancing accountability

A. International processes

48. In the absence of progress towards accountability by domestic mechanisms, and in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 46/1, OHCHR established the Sri Lanka accountability project. In resolution 57/1, the Council decided to extend this capacity. However, to date, the Government of Sri Lanka has declined to engage with the project and has continued to reject accountability-related resolutions of the Human Rights Council.

B. Preserving information and evidence: preventing the disappearance of truth

49. During the reporting period, civil society actors continued to report threats linked to their efforts to document past violations. The withdrawal of key funding has further undermined their capacity to preserve archives and safeguard evidence of past crimes. These constraints have heightened concerns that critical documentation may be lost or destroyed.

50. In response, OHCHR, through its accountability project, has continued to expand its secure repository, which now contains over 105,000 items, including approximately 75,800 from the 2015 OHCHR investigation on Sri Lanka, around 2,000 from earlier United Nations initiatives, and 34,000 independently collected by the project over the past four years. This repository serves as a unique resource to support truth and justice efforts, capturing patterns of international crimes, including enforced disappearances, unlawful killings, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and violations affecting children. Despite calls to relevant States to supplement the OHCHR repository,⁸⁰ no significant information has been received from them to date.

51. While the repository holds significant analytical value, its availability for direct use in legal proceedings is dependent on factors including consent to share materials with third parties, particularly Sri Lankan authorities. The views and concerns of victims and survivors should be duly considered in decisions regarding the repository's future accessibility and use.

⁷⁹ See <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/sri-lanka-orders-new-probe-into-easter-sunday-bombings/article68734185.ece>.

⁸⁰ A/HRC/57/19, para. 51.

C. Supporting judicial and legal proceedings

52. In the absence of effective domestic action, OHCHR prioritized responding to formal requests for assistance from jurisdictions pursuing cases under accepted principles of universal jurisdiction, in accordance with international due process and fair trial standards. These requests concern violations committed by various actors across different phases of the conflict. OHCHR has supported these efforts by sharing contextual information and relevant evidence with requesting authorities, in accordance with the Secretariat's cooperation framework. It has also facilitated informal contacts between authorities and witnesses willing to provide testimony.

53. Despite these efforts, OHCHR is not aware of any individual who has been publicly prosecuted and tried for international crimes related to the conflict. To facilitate such progress, OHCHR engages with States, legal practitioners and human rights actors to strengthen exchange and cooperation in this area. It also advances structural analyses, crime pattern assessments, and perpetrator profiles to support prosecutorial and judicial authorities in establishing context, linkages and modes of liability.

D. Engagement with victims and survivors

54. Victims and survivors of conflict, in particular those who speak out, continue to face marginalization, silencing and intimidation. OHCHR has prioritized a victim-centred approach, partnering with over 230 civil society organizations, legal actors and victims' associations. Through these collaborations, OHCHR has worked to identify legal avenues for accountability, support survivors in navigating justice mechanisms abroad, and address systemic barriers to participation. To ensure relevance and sensitivity to affected communities, OHCHR consulted 39 human rights defenders and organizations from the north, east and south, the diaspora, and international NGOs to inform the development of its work. It has also conducted a focused consultation on conflict-related sexual violence, involving 27 interviews and group discussions with survivors, their representatives, civil society actors, and legal practitioners. The findings confirm that conflict-related sexual violence remains deeply stigmatized and insufficiently acknowledged, with ongoing impunity contributing to long-term trauma and harm. Survivors described enduring psychological and social impacts, compounded by silence and the absence of redress. Many expressed a profound sense of abandonment, noting that impunity had become a second form of violence, perpetuating cycles of harm across generations.

E. Developing future strategies for accountability

55. Despite persistent serious and well-documented accountability gaps, there have been no significant developments in international legal action during the reporting period. Sri Lanka has not accepted the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and no inter-State complaints have been brought by any of the States Members of the United Nations before the International Court of Justice or relevant United Nations treaty bodies. While OHCHR notes the imposition of targeted sanctions by some Member States against Sri Lankans allegedly involved in serious human rights violations, these measures remain limited in scope and cannot in themselves substitute for criminal prosecutions and trials, which are essential to delivering justice. To help to address this accountability gap, OHCHR has strengthened engagement with a range of stakeholders, including Member States, national and international prosecutors, civil society organizations, and victims' groups, and has participated in international conferences, expert consultations, and bilateral meetings to promote the use of available legal avenues.

56. In addition to encouraging the new Government to concretely demonstrate its commitment to accountability at the national level, OHCHR reiterates its previous recommendations and calls upon the international community to make use of the range of opportunities provided by available legal and policy tools to advance justice and accountability in Sri Lanka. States are further encouraged to adopt additional targeted measures, including sanctions, enhanced vetting of officials, and strict human rights

screening procedures for peacekeeping operations and bilateral defence cooperation frameworks. States should also facilitate safe access and information-sharing for individuals with relevant knowledge and actively support diaspora-led truth-telling and memorialization efforts.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

57. The new Government has a historic opportunity and a clear mandate from communities across Sri Lanka to implement transformative reforms and deliver truth and justice, laying the foundation for sustainable peace. Ensuring accountability and addressing the root causes of the conflict are indispensable to realizing the Government's vision of national unity and creating a society free from discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity and religion. At the same time, undertaking fundamental constitutional, legal and institutional reforms, which comply with the country's international human rights obligations, is essential to bringing about transformative changes. OHCHR, together with the United Nations country team, continues to stand ready to assist Sri Lanka on this path.

58. The Government has pledged a fresh direction on several long-standing issues, including addressing some emblematic cases to deliver justice to victims, restoring the rule of law, and eliminating ethnic discrimination and divisive politics. Those commitments need to be translated into a coherent time-bound plan and concrete steps that demonstrate the capacity and willingness of the State to address the issues. This must include accountability for serious crimes and human rights violations committed during the war. Trust-building measures, combined with a comprehensive road map for truth and justice, could help to restore confidence in the institutions of the State and the rule of law.

59. Recognizing the severe impacts of the economic crisis and debt burden on the public, particularly the most vulnerable, OHCHR continues to urge alignment of the Government's economic policy and fiscal consolidation with the international human rights obligations of Sri Lanka, including by ensuring adequate social protection. OHCHR continues to underscore the need for the external creditors of Sri Lanka to provide the Government with the fiscal space needed to realise economic, social and cultural rights and to ensure that austerity measures do not undermine the ability of Sri Lanka to fulfil its human rights obligations.

60. The ongoing trends observed during the reporting period, such as threats, intimidation and violence targeting victims and civil society actors, and continued serious human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and detentions under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, torture and custodial deaths, must be addressed.

61. The Government of Sri Lanka has for years failed to acknowledge the responsibility of the State and the role of the military and other security forces in allegedly committing gross human rights violations and international crimes. The President has publicly recognized the shared pain and grief of individuals from all communities. It is important to build on this momentum and to translate it into tangible results for accountability in the form of truth-telling, justice, reparations and non-recurrence, as necessary to end impunity and provide for healing and closure. Welcoming the Government's initiative to establish an independent public prosecution office, OHCHR underscores the need for transparency and the proactive inclusion of civil society organizations in the process to ensure the credibility of the office. He urges the Government to implement significant security sector reforms, which should involve vetting to remove those implicated in serious violations and establishing an operational and judicial framework ensuring strict compliance with human rights standards.

62. At the same time, international engagement, including through the Human Rights Council, remains essential and can be supportive of accountability and long-term reconciliation and sustainable peace. While primary responsibility for investigating and prosecuting crimes under international law and ensuring accountability lies with the Government of Sri Lanka, this can be complemented and

supported by international means. The Council and individual States Members of the United Nations should continue to support and use the complementary role of the strengthened capacity of OHCHR to undertake accountability-related work under Human Rights Council resolutions 46/1, 51/1 and 57/1, and contribute to meaningful accountability and reconciliation efforts both in Sri Lanka and internationally.

63. Building on recommendations made in previous reports,⁸¹ OHCHR calls upon the Government:

(a) To create an enabling environment for transitional justice by acceding to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, implementing confidence-building measures such as releasing military-held lands, halting new land seizures and accelerating titling efforts in the north and east, releasing all long-term detainees under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, supporting victims' memorialization initiatives and ensuring the impartiality of the Office on Missing Persons, including by seeking international expertise and monitoring to build its credibility;

(b) To publish and disseminate all unpublished reports of the various human rights-related commissions of inquiry, such as the zonal and all-island commissions on disappearances and the Army Court of Inquiry into civilian casualties, and the annexes thereto;⁸²

(c) To recognize the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and consider communications under article 31 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;

(d) To remove credibly alleged perpetrators of human rights violations from power and refrain from appointing or promoting them to high-level positions in the Government, the security sector, or diplomatic postings;

(e) To apply a moratorium on the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, expedite its repeal and ensure that any replacement legislation is consistent with international human rights law and the benchmarks previously set out by United Nations human rights experts;⁸³

(f) To repeal or amend existing laws or proposed laws that unduly restrict the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, association, and peaceful assembly, including the Online Safety Act, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act, the draft Non-Governmental Organizations (Registration and Supervision) Act, and proposed amendments to Personal Data Protection Act;

(g) To publicly issue unequivocal instructions to all branches of the military, intelligence and police forces that enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, and other human rights violations are prohibited and will be systematically investigated and punished;

(h) To ensure that the public prosecutorial body is fully independent, effective and robust and is able to assess relevant information and make independent prosecutorial decisions, and consider the creation of a judicial mechanism with independent special counsel in relation to the cases of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law committed in previous decades;

(i) To accelerate investigations and prosecutions in emblematic cases of human rights violations, as well as the Easter Sunday bombings, in compliance with international human rights standards, seek international assistance to strengthen

⁸¹ A/HRC/46/20, para. 60; and A/HRC/49/9, para. 67; A/HRC/51/5, paras. 70 and 71; and A/HRC/54/20, paras. 64 and 65.

⁸² The Government of Sri Lanka informed OHCHR that the Presidential Secretariat is in the process of publishing these documents on the Presidential Secretariat website.

⁸³ See communication LKA 7/2021, available from <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26863>.

capacities, and ensure the full participation of victims and their representatives and ensure victim and witness protection;

(j) To swiftly amend the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act to meet its international human rights obligations;

(k) To avoid the involvement of the military in law enforcement, commercial activities and civil affairs and significantly reduce the military presence in the Northern and Eastern Provinces as part of security sector reform;

(l) To adjudicate land disputes in ways that are transparent, consultative, impartial and non-discriminatory and ensure interfaith dialogue about the designation of religious sites;

(m) To implement its commitment to devolution of political and administrative power to every local government, district and province;

(n) To assess and mitigate the impact of austerity measures on disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups; and to take all appropriate measures to protect the core content of rights under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, especially for those individuals and groups;

(o) To order all security and intelligence agencies to immediately end all forms of surveillance and harassment of and reprisals against representatives of civil society, human rights defenders, journalists, victims and their families, especially women;

(p) To accept invitations from, or extend invitations to, relevant special procedure mandate holders to conduct country visits.

64. OHCHR recommends that the Human Rights Council and Member States, as applicable:

(a) Support Sri Lanka in its efforts to promote legal and institutional reform, including measures to ensure accountability, and to advance nationwide reconciliation, peacebuilding and coexistence;

(b) Cooperate in investigating and prosecuting alleged perpetrators of international crimes committed by all parties in Sri Lanka through judicial proceedings in national jurisdictions, including under accepted principles of extraterritorial or universal jurisdiction, through relevant international networks and mutual legal assistance processes, and in cooperation with survivors, families and their representatives;

(c) Consider using other international legal options to advance accountability in Sri Lanka;

(d) Explore, as part of a wider range of accountability measures and consistent with international law, further targeted sanctions such as asset freezes and travel bans against individuals credibly alleged to have perpetrated gross international human rights violations or serious humanitarian law violations;

(e) Support OHCHR to continue its monitoring and reporting and its strengthened work on accountability for human rights violations and related crimes in Sri Lanka.